

They are: The Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial for 1998, 500,000 silver dollars, the Dolley Madison coin for the benefit of Montpelier in 1999, 500,000 silver dollars, and the George Washington coin to benefit Mount Vernon also in 1999, 100,000 gold \$5 pieces.

Among its other virtues, this program will introduce a younger and more diverse population to the fascinating hobby of coin collecting. This bill will also protect the taxpayer from the abuses common to many earlier coin programs and still benefit a number of worthy causes.

I urge its immediate adoption.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the initial request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION AIRCRAFT TRANSFER ACT OF 1996

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 2078) to authorize the sale of excess Department of Defense aircraft to facilitate the suppression of wildfire, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I wanted to thank them for bringing this up. I know the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON] has worked terribly hard on this. For those of us who live in the West, where forest fires are so eminent, this is essential, because it gets us the airplanes we need to fight those wildfires. So I thank the gentleman from New York, and we thank the Congress for getting this here. Hopefully we will not have any wildfires. If we do, we had better be ready for them. I thank the gentleman very much, for the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in strong support of the Wildfire Suppression Aircraft Transfer Act of 1996, a bipartisan bill that I introduced in the House and Senator BINGAMAN introduced in the Senate.

This bill authorizes the Department of Defense to sell excess military aircraft to private contractors that provide fire fighting services to the Federal Government.

The powerful wildfires that spread throughout the West this past year have highlighted the need for an improved, modernized and expanded fleet of airtankers to help the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior to fight wildfires.

The current fleet of World War II and Korean War vintage aircraft needs to be replaced with modern, turbine powered aircraft that are more efficient and safe.

The only reliable source of these aircraft is excess military aircraft available from the Department of Defense that can be converted to deliver fire retardant.

This legislation would provide the authority to the Secretary of Defense to sell appropriate aircraft to qualified airtanker operators solely for use in fighting wildfires.

In New Mexico, many communities were threatened by wildfires this past summer including the community of Lama. The wildfires were burning on very steep slopes, with high fuel loads, strong wind gusts and unseasonably hot and dry weather.

For this reason, the firefighters need as much assistance as possible. By upgrading our airtanker fleets, we will have a better chance of protecting and saving our lives, property, and forests.

Because of the nearly 150,000 acres of forest and grasslands that were burned when wildfires ravaged New Mexico, and the many more wildfires that burned throughout the West this past year, it is essential that we give firefighters the necessary tools that they need. This bill provides the necessary equipment to assist firefighters.

I want to thank Senator BINGAMAN for all his hard work on this legislation, and I also want to thank the Members on both sides of the aisle who worked to pass this important piece of legislation.

Mrs. SCHROEDER. I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the Senate bill, as follows:

S. 2078

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION. 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Wildfire Suppression Aircraft Transfer Act of 1996".

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO SELL AIRCRAFT AND PARTS FOR WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION PURPOSES.

(a) AUTHORITY.—(1) Notwithstanding section 202 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (40 U.S.C. 483) and subject to subsections (b) and (c), the Secretary of Defense may, during the period beginning on October 1, 1996, and ending on September 30, 2000, sell the aircraft and aircraft parts referred to in paragraph (2) to persons or entities that contract with the Federal Government for the delivery of fire retardant by air in order to suppress wildfire.

(2) Paragraph (1) applies to aircraft and aircraft parts of the Department of Defense that are determined by the Secretary to be—

(A) excess to the needs of the Department; and

(B) acceptable for commercial sale.

(b) CONDITIONS OF SALE.—Aircraft and aircraft parts sold under subsection (a)—

(1) may be used only for the provision of airtanker services for wildfire suppression purposes; and

(2) may not be flown or otherwise removed from the United States unless dispatched by the National Interagency Fire Center in support of an international agreement to assist in wildfire suppression efforts or for other purposes jointly approved by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Agriculture in writing in advance.

(c) CERTIFICATION OF PERSONS AND ENTITIES.—The Secretary of Defense may sell aircraft and aircraft parts to a person or entity under subsection (a) only if the Secretary of Agriculture certifies to the Secretary of De-

fense, in writing, before the sale that the person or entity is capable of meeting the terms and conditions of a contract to deliver fire retardant by air.

(d) REGULATIONS.—(1) As soon as practicable after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Administrator of General Services, prescribe regulations relating to the sale of aircraft and aircraft parts under this section.

(2) The regulations shall—

(A) ensure that the sale of the aircraft and aircraft parts is made at fair market value (as determined by the Secretary of Defense) and, to the extent practicable, on a competitive basis;

(B) require a certification by the purchaser that the aircraft and aircraft parts will be used only in accordance with the conditions set forth in subsection (b);

(C) establish appropriate means of verifying and enforcing the use of the aircraft and aircraft parts by the purchaser and other end users in accordance with the conditions set forth in subsections (b) and (e); and

(D) ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that the Secretary consults with the Administrator of General Services and with the heads of appropriate departments and agencies of the Federal Government regarding alternative requirements for such aircraft and aircraft parts under this section.

(e) ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The Secretary of Defense may require such other terms and conditions in connection with each sale of aircraft and aircraft parts under this section as the Secretary considers appropriate for such sale. Such terms and conditions shall meet the requirements of the regulations prescribed under subsection (d).

(f) REPORT.—Not later than March 31, 2000, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Committee on National Security of the House of Representatives a report on the Secretary's exercise of authority under this section. The report shall set forth—

(1) the number and type of aircraft sold under the authority, and the terms and conditions under which the aircraft were sold;

(2) the persons or entities to which the aircraft were sold; and

(3) an accounting of the current use of the aircraft sold.

(g) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section may be construed as affecting the authority of the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration under any other provision of law.

The Senate bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MARINE MINERAL RESOURCES RESEARCH ACT OF 1996

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the Senate bill (S. 1194) to promote the research, identification, assessment, and exploration of marine mineral resources, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.